

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
11:00 a.m. PT, Thursday July 11, 1996

Contact: CDC Press Office Vancouver
(604) 844-2851

AIDS IN THE WORKPLACE SURVEY IS A “WAKE-UP CALL” FOR AMERICAN BUSINESSES

CDC National Survey Finds Both Good News and Challenges Ahead for AIDS Response

Vancouver, BC -- Today, during a presentation at the XI International Conference on AIDS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will release a national survey of AIDS policies and education programs in the workplace. This survey revealed that nearly half of American worksites have implemented HIV/AIDS workplace policies and one in six worksites offered their employees education programs that address HIV and AIDS. “The results are good news and a challenge to do better,” according to Helene Gayle, M.D., M.P.H., director of CDC’s National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention. “Although many businesses are establishing AIDS policies, the survey shows that there are employers who have not yet implemented AIDS education programs.”

Challenges Remain

The survey included over 2,200 businesses from across the country and, according to the survey, 43% of worksites with more than 50 employees said they have a policy regarding an employee with a disability or life-threatening illness including HIV/AIDS. The survey also found that corporate philanthropy (fundraising and volunteerism) was the most common way large and small businesses were involved with HIV/AIDS. Nearly all worksites offered group health insurance, although 5 percent limited or excluded HIV from at least one of the policies offered to employees.

Sixteen percent of firms provided employees education, representing more than 30,000 businesses committing to HIV education programs. Of these, nearly all indicated that the program included a lecture, seminar or discussion group. Almost 3/4 said these programs were mandatory for at least some managers, supervisors, and employees.

A Snapshot of the American Workplace

“The survey gives us important information about HIV education and policies in the American workplace,” says Cynthia Jorgensen, Ph.D., CDC’s principal researcher for the survey. “Never before has anyone taken a snapshot of AIDS workplace programs. The information from the survey will be vital in tracking the progress of their adoption and implementation.”

One of the objectives of the survey was to determine the adoption of the CDC sponsored Business Responds to AIDS (BRTA) workplace program, developed in 1992, which contains 5 core elements. The survey found that 41 percent of large firms have adopted at least two of the HIV/AIDS workplace program elements recommended by CDC.

A Five-Point Prevention Program

The Business Responds to AIDS Program is a public-private partnership of the CDC, the public health sector, business and labor designed to prevent the spread of HIV through a comprehensive workplace education program. The CDC, through this partnership, helps businesses across the country design policies and implement education programs for employees, their families and the community.

The BRTA Program recommends businesses establish comprehensive HIV and AIDS prevention programs comprised of the following five components:

- Development of an HIV/AIDS policy
- Training of supervisors in the policy
- HIV/AIDS education for employees
- HIV/AIDS education for employees' families
- Encouragement of employee volunteerism, community service and corporate philanthropy

Large and Small Businesses Are Responding

Through the Business Responds to AIDS Program, CDC has forged partnerships with many large and small businesses. As a result, many businesses find that because of their HIV/AIDS workplace efforts, their workforce is much more at ease with dealing with HIV related issues. In addition, many businesses consider AIDS education an investment in their employees and in the long-term health and productivity as a business.

“HIV and AIDS is the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 25 and 44--a group that represents more than half of the nation's workforce,” says Gayle. “Individually and collectively, businesses and the workforce have an impact on nearly every aspect of community life. Because of their commitment to the community, businesses should be valuable allies in the campaign to educate the public about HIV/AIDS.”

Businesses can obtain information and resources for developing workplace HIV/AIDS

prevention and education programs by calling the CDC Business and Labor Resource Service toll-free at 1-800-458-5231. The resource Service offers a Manager's Kit with step-by-step information on how to develop a comprehensive workplace program. Since 1992, the Resource Service has answered more than 25,000 information requests.